

June 20, 2017 Oral History Interview with Tariq Rauf

Citation:

“Oral History Interview with Tariq Rauf,” June 20, 2017, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Contributed to NPIHP by Michal Onderco.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/177546>

Summary:

Expert Advisor to Canada’s delegation to the 1995 review conference.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY).

Original Language:

English

Contents:

- English Transcription

Tariq Rauf

Canada

Oral history interview conducted by Michal Onderco by Skype on 20 June 2017

Michal Onderco:

I want to start again by thanking you for finding the time to talk to me. I like to at the beginning always place the people within the National Delegation. So how did you become the advisor to the national delegation and what was your position within the Delegation?

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah, so in Canada, I worked at the Canadian Center for Arms Control and Disarmament in Ottawa. This was an independent research center on arms control funded mainly by the Foreign Ministry. But it was completely independent. They didn't exercise any control over us and many times we were critical of the Canadian government's policy. And for the Foreign Ministry, this was part of Canadian democracy: supporting a think tank, which may or may not agree with government policy.

So our think tank was like the Arms Control Association in Washington in the general sense, partly advocacy, partly research. And we were also asked to testify before the Parliamentary committees on national defense and also arms control. And so I joined the center in 1986. And in 1987 was the first PrepCom for the 1990 conference. So at that time, Canada decided to include non-government experts on the Canadian Delegation as a full member. So we had complete access to all the documentation, speeches, and so on. And we, of course, had a confidentiality understanding, what we could say.

So I've been on the Canadian Delegation since 1987, as an expert. And in most Foreign Ministries, people are in that position for three or four years and then they move out. So over time, I became the continuity on the Canadian Delegation. And on both sides we maintained trust. So as the people left and new people joined the department on the nuclear issue, we kept up our contacts and they had enough trust in me to rely on what I would say happened in previous meetings when records were not available. And also because I was advocacy, we also had good relations with all the main political parties in Canada. So Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, and the New Democratic Party. These are the three parties. So we know their foreign affairs, their critics, and so on. So then over time I got to know the Foreign Ministers personally. That was another level of trust.

So that continued until 2000, even after I left Canada in 1995 and our center ceased to exist in 1995. And I joined the IAEA in 2002. Then, of course, I couldn't be a part of a national delegation. So then, I was Alternate Head of the IAEA Delegation until I finished at the agency.

Michal Onderco:

And so in 1995, when you were at the conference, you were treated as a regular member of the delegation. So you were also a part of the confidential, bilateral and small group negotiations.

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah, so in 1995, from January till June, I was given the position in the Foreign Ministry. And so even though I was not a civil servant, I had a temporary assignment. So we already were planning for the 1995 conference outcome in 1994.

Michal Onderco:

That was actually my question. So how did you start with that planning in Canada?

Tariq Rauf:

So we, at that time, the Foreign Ministry put together a good team, which was headed by

Ambassador Christopher Westdal, who was the Ambassador for Disarmament. And then we had in the Department for Arms Control and Disarmament you've spoken to -- Sven Jurchewsky and others. So this was a creative bunch of people. And as a non-nuclear weapon state, Canada always wanted to push not only non-proliferation and peaceful uses, but also disarmament.

You'll recall in 1945, as a result of the three-nation declaration with the Prime Ministers of Canada and the UK and the President of the United States, these three countries declared that they had the technology and knowledge to make nuclear weapons. And Canada became the first country to say, "Well, we will not make nuclear weapons." So nuclear disarmament and arms control has been a very important of Canadian foreign policy, over the decades, regardless of the government in place.

And so some of these diplomats had already been encouraged in the late 70's by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the father of the current Prime Minister, who went on a global campaign to support nuclear disarmament after the election of Ronald Reagan because everyone thought we would go up, you know, in a ball of nuclear fire. So in the Foreign Ministry, there was already this culture.

And by that time, there was also a grouping of former diplomats and academics called PPNN. You must have heard about them, the Program for Promoting Nuclear Nonproliferation.

Michal Onderco:
Yes.

Tariq Rauf:
So they'll do one or two meetings a year. So, at the 1994 meeting, which I think was in the fall of 1994 or summer, this was focused very directly on 1995 Review Conference. And so we from Canada already came up with some ideas that this provide the unique leverage to strengthen the review process, to get some more concessions from the weapon states on nuclear disarmament, and to agree on some benchmarks against which to measure. But in 1994, we discussed this with the Mexicans, we discussed this with the South Africans. The South African there was Peter Goosen, whose name you must have come across.

Michal Onderco:
Yes.

Tariq Rauf:
So the ball started rolling about a year before the review conference.

Michal Onderco:
But if I may interject here, I mean, in 1994, and actually as the last PrepCom, so the Africans, for example, were opposed to the indefinite extension. So what was it that you were having with them?

Tariq Rauf:
Well, Canada, of course, was a staunch proponent of indefinite extension. South Africa was a new kid on the block. They had given up nuclear weapons, joined the NPT, had a transition to a government under Mandela. So they had a lot of credibility. So Canada's initial approaches were actually to Mexico, as you know, a North American partner.

Michal Onderco:
Yes.

Tariq Rauf:
Mexico has been a very strong supporter of disarmament, Garcia Robles and so on. Mexicans initially were prepared to be engaged. They hadn't come up with a final position. But then, unfortunately for them, they had an economic and currency crisis and the peso had to be rescued by the U.S. Because of that, the Mexicans lost any leverage that they might have. They didn't want

to go against the U.S. on important issue, so they didn't become a big champion for disarmament in 1995. And they also, for one reason or another, did want to be a partner with Canada on pushing for an extension. I think because they also didn't want to be disloyal to NAM. So they took a neutral position.

So then the South Africans were also thinking about making a big splash at the '95 conference, the first conference. They had some very smart people -- Tom Markram, Peter Goosen, a fellow called Benny, I forget his standard last name. So they all had quite ambitious ideas so it was a coincidental sort of coordination, so to speak, between Canada and South Africa.

Michal Onderco:

What were your expectations at the time for the outcome? You were an independent expert. Was your best judgment at the time that the conference will be successful in terms of delivering the indefinite extension?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, going into the conference, it was not very clear whether indefinite extension would be achieved or not. But once the conference started, a group was formed which included the Russians, the Americans, the British, and the French -- the four -- not China, but these four. And so within this group, a strategy was created on persuading countries that had not yet indicated support for indefinite extension. And also, at the NAM summit, they were not able to reach an agreement on a unified NAM policy at the Cartagena Summit (sic). So some people have speculated that some of the more powerful countries engineered a discord so they couldn't have it.

So that meant that the NAM increase went into '95 without an agreed NAM position. Many of them were supporting Indonesia, Venezuela and others for rolling extension, not an indefinite extension. But the task then became: when we counted the number of votes, we counted somewhere around between 50 to 60 could be counted on for indefinite. So the task was we'd get another 30 votes. So at that time it was 178 parties, so we needed 90 for a simple majority.

So then we had to come up with a strategy on how to keep the 60 votes that we partly had. Most of the 60, you know, 35 or 40 were Western countries or Western-oriented countries, NATO, EU, or former countries of the Soviet Block who wanted to please the Americans and the British and the others, for one reason or another.

So then a strategy was crafted, but primarily by Canada, to use different groups. So we had the sort of the Mason group, which the composition you saw in my article. We had the cosmopolitan core group, which was about 17 countries. Blending together were different countries from different groupings to promote indefinite extension, and to go out and sell the case for it. And part of the selling was, you know, the indefinite extension wouldn't be a simple extension. We wanted something on disarmament. We wanted to strengthen the review process so that the non-nuclear weapon states would have a forum and a mechanism under which to review the Treaty. And so the Treaty after 1995 would have a different mechanism for accountability than before 1995.

Michal Onderco:

I'll come to this point in a second, but I want to take a step back. Because in your article, you mentioned that there should be this simple resolution to sort of demonstrate there is a majority. The author of this idea was Grigory Berdennikov.

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah, so Gregory Berdennikov's contribution was to get a signed support. You go to delegations and sign a paper that Country X, we support. And it was my task to collect those papers. So I was the only one who at any given time knew how many papers there were. Because to the Western countries, I would give them a lower number than I had...

Michal Onderco:

Why?

Tariq Rauf:

So that they would keep up their efforts and they wouldn't become overconfident. And to the NAM countries when they would call me, I would give them a higher number. I didn't consult anyone. I didn't ask anyone's permission. This was just me. I would give them higher numbers so they would think that the momentum for indefinite extension is now unstoppable. And nobody ever asked me to bring the pieces of paper to a room and they would count it. They just trusted me. So I had my own personal strategy, which I didn't admit to them at the time, of course.

Michal Onderco:

One of the things that Berdennikov told me when interviewed him was that there was a fear that some of the countries in the Western group didn't believe in the extension. And so this was a mechanism to sort of bind them in, to avoid any ambiguity with the Western group.

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah, but my recollection is not only that, but I think the danger was bigger from the non-Western group countries. Because, you know, the Western group countries at least the countries have some sense of responsibility. And if they, sort of, betrayed their vote, you know, there would be consequences in the years to come. People would remember. And so you are betraying somebody in your own group. That is a much more difficult thing than to betray somebody from a rival group. Then he can say, "Sorry, you know, this is part of politics. Tough luck. You are not in our group," or whatever.

So my recollection is that once a country had signed, it would be more difficult for them to come back and say, "Bring me back my paper. We've changed our mind." And then, they could put pressure on this country to stay within the group. So we reached somewhere around 70-75 without much difficulty, but getting the last 15 or so was much more difficult.

Michal Onderco:

So were you already approaching these countries at the conference or before the conference?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, the big powers had already been approaching countries well before the conference. But then, during the conference, some of the depositories brought in retired ambassadors, ambassadors who had been posted in different countries, who had high level connections still. Call up their contacts in those countries and say, "Well, we request you to support indefinite extension." And this, both serving and retired ambassadors also would discuss: every morning, we would have a meeting before the review conference session was, at 10. And then, different countries would then decide on different pressure tactics. Because if they had promised to give me the piece of paper and they hadn't, then the next day, these people would be quite angry. "You know, this country had told us they would give a paper and they haven't."

Michal Onderco:

So can you give me an example of such a pressure tactic?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, some pressure tactics were threatening the ambassadors with going above their heads to their foreign ministers or their heads of government. Others were threatened that, you know, there would be consequences in the bilateral relationship. Others were threatened, you know, there would be implications for trade relationships. And I see this type of pressure even to this day. Even when I was advising in 2015 and 2014, this pressure by ex-colonial powers and some of the big powers. Their behavior doesn't change.

Michal Onderco:

When I interviewed, for example, Ambassador Taylhardat of Venezuela, he told me that he felt that

he was a victim of one of the strategies. That someone has called up Caracas, and essentially he was sidelined from the delegation.

Tariq Rauf:

Absolutely, and I have written about this. So the terms in the review process was invented by Adolfo Taylhardat. Strengthened review process, but he wanted a rolling extension. And then he disappeared after the end of the second week. You know, this is Caracas before the current government: the old Venezuelan government. And in his place came another ambassador, who was sort of completely different from Adolfo's strategy of using the leverage of a rolling extension. So Adolfo was pulled away, just as Miguel Marin Bosch was also mainly sidelined after the 1990 review conference. He didn't wield as much power as he did in 1990.

So here you have two examples of diplomats who suffered personal consequences. And a repeat of this was in 2008 in the Nuclear Suppliers Group when India was given the exception, when a lot of pressure was brought on those countries that didn't want to support that. Again, in the same way, calling Presidents, Prime Ministers directly. And then their own governments putting pressure on their own ambassadors. "This is your instruction. You will follow this."

Michal Onderco:

I want to come back to the question of approaching these countries. In the article that you wrote with Rebecca Johnson, you talk about the Canadian strategy of permanence with accountability, and that this was a way how you tried to get countries aboard. How did the permanence with accountability look like in, sort of, nuts and bolts?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, as I mentioned, you know, starting in '94, Canada wanted to change the review process because until the '95 review conference in the PrepCom, you could not discuss substantive issues. You couldn't discuss disarmament; you couldn't discuss non-proliferation. You could only discuss procedural arrangements. So one change was that for the PrepCom's purpose, we shouldn't have to wait for five years to discuss the treaty. We should be to discuss the treaty in every PrepCom. Therefore, the idea was to double the time of each PrepCom from five working days to 10 working days. And in the new form of the new form of the PrepCom, we discuss what we had agreed in '95 and how this was being implemented.

So the permanence with accountability was thought up Ambassador Westdal. He also invented the term "holding the feet of the nuclear weapon's states to the fire" as well. So the Principles and Objectives that we agreed to in 199[5], we would see what progress had been made. And if some objectives had been achieved, we could then perhaps agree on new ones. So that was what was being sold -- that until '95, we could only meet every five years. The PrepCom couldn't discuss any substance. We had no mechanism of holding the parties to account for the three pillars. And by strengthening the review process, we could do that.

So that was one of the convincing arguments. And then the cosmopolitan core group, the Mason group -- these were used to, again, spread the message. And then we did a number of lunches. I think we called them Seventeen Tables. So Ambassador Westdal hosted lunches and dinners for countries that we thought would be won over to our side. And so in these lunches and dinners, there would be 12 to 15 countries. And Christopher Westdal would then make the case to persuade them why they should support us.

Michal Onderco:

But were these Principles ever put on paper before the conference?

Tariq Rauf:

They were not. As far as I know, they were not put on paper in the form that they appeared finally. But, I mean, many of these things are not rocket science, you know, CTBT, nuclear export controls, reducing levels of nuclear weapons, tactical nuclear weapons. These have been on the agenda for

a long while. So the overall scheme was on paper, but as far as I remembered, the papers were not shared broadly. They were shared in terms of discussions. Sven would have talked to you about it in discussions at the PrepCom II, I think with Peter Goosen. But Dhanapala was given a thing and then he sort of put them in a draft document. And that draft document was then negotiated in long hours of the night in the last week, or so to end up in the version we had.

Michal Onderco:

Were these ideas developed indigenously in Canada, or were you developing them together with South Africa? Because Alfred Nzo mentioned a lot of the ideas that later turned up in the Principles and Objectives in his speech.

Tariq Rauf:

Sorry, whose speech? Nzo's speech?

Michal Onderco:

Nzo, yeah.

Tariq Rauf:

Well, this is where we have a difference in point of view between Canada and South Africa in the post-mortem of the review conference. And so in some of my articles you have seen me very strongly assert that these were made in Canada. And this was deliberate because, in my view, after the review conference, South Africa wanted to take the credit all for itself. That all the thinking was theirs, this was all their work, everyone else played a secondary role. So in '95, '97, '98, 2000, one of the reasons for writing these articles and repeating the Canadian role was to reemphasize for the record, that the bulk of the thinking was done by us. We have to give it to South Africa, that by joining in, and supporting and taking this onboard, using their credibility particularly in the NAM space, without them we wouldn't have been able to have indefinite extension. So we have to give South Africa that credit. But I sort of differ that all the intellectual thinking was done by them. They, of course, contributed, but I still maintain that the core came from our side.

Michal Onderco:

One thing that a little puzzles me is that by studying the declassified documents in South Africa, the decision to support the indefinite extension came quite late, came about two weeks before the conference.

Tariq Rauf:

That part I don't know. So I'm hearing it from you the first time. I'm not questioning it, but my understanding is in our discussions with [South Africa]. You know, there's one thing between the bureaucracy deciding on a position and then getting the Minister to sign off on it. So my understanding is that the bureaucracy signed off on supporting indefinite extension, but at some point they needed to get the political support and that's probably what you were seeing in the declassified documents, the political support rather than the bureaucratic support in dealing with the desk officers and the people responsible for NPT diplomacy.

Michal Onderco:

But there has been a sort of intellectual cooperation on developing these principles and objectives well before April 1995.

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah, in a general sense, yes.

Michal Onderco:

In a general sense. Well, you already answered three of my questions that I wanted to ask. My next question was: some of the diplomats, especially from the P5 countries, would tell me that there was absolutely no hesitation on the part of the P5 to push through a vote in case there would not be a consensus.

Tariq Rauf:

Yes, this was already decided early on, that Article 10 to require a decision by a majority. And that if necessary, a vote would be called, which was one of the reasons why Berdennikov proposed that we collect these pieces of paper. And it was also to show to Dhanapalla there was a majority. Because at least four of the five, in my view, did not trust Dhanapalla fully.

Michal Onderco:

In what way?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, he was a chairman coming from a NAM country. And so although he had given indication that he would like indefinite extension, you know, given the suspicious nature...

Michal Onderco:

Well, some of my interviewees questioned, some of them asserted openly that Dhanapala's preferred option was not an indefinite extension.

Tariq Rauf:

Yep, I've heard that as well. So this was to force the President's hand. And we had 111 signatures. So that was put before Dhanapala and he was told that, "Look, we have 111 signatures. We, if necessarily, we're going to call for a vote." And so Dhanapala, when confronted with that, had then no option even if he was thinking about extension short of indefinite extension. So then he has his famous phrase, which you read, that he didn't want "a naked decision." He wanted to dress it up and that's where these two decisions came in, which led to the extension decision. And then we also had to get the Middle Eastern countries through their Middle East resolution.

Michal Onderco:

I'll come back to Middle East in a second, but you already twice alluded to four out of five, of the P5. So I presume you think about China to be outside.

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah.

Michal Onderco:

Why so?

Tariq Rauf:

China, usually, as you know, in these things does take a forceful position. They just go along with what seems to be the consensus, or they support the Russians more recently, depending on the politics of the day. So at that time, they had Ambassador Sha Zukang, who was there who was a very forceful personality in the Conference on Disarmament. But, you know, China wants to be the champion of the developing world, so they cannot afford to be completely on the Western side, so to speak.

Michal Onderco:

But was there ever, for example, a doubt about China's preference in terms of the extension?

Tariq Rauf:

As far as I know, no. Everyone believed that China would support what the other four would do. And I remember once I was talking to Ambassador Sha Zukang personally and talking about, you know, the role of the P5. And so he sort of said that China is a member of the P5, China will remain a member of the P5, and there on some issues on which China will always support P5 solidarity. And I was trying to draw him into that, you know, P5 solidarity may in some way be betraying China's potential as a champion on non-aligned countries and so on. So on this important issue, and on other important issues, China generally tends to go with the P5 consensus, but it's not in the lead. It's not taking the lead in forming the consensus. It ends up being a joiner.

Michal Onderco:

Yeah. We already alluded to the negotiations in the Friends of Presidents group where there was a small group of countries. What was the toughest part to negotiate about principles and objectives in that part? What was the most contentious part?

Tariq Rauf:

As always, the most contentious part is on the disarmament part. The non-proliferation part is also there. But, you know, in 1995, the Additional Protocol was not there yet. So it wasn't that contentious. The additional protocol issue became contentious after 1997 when the IARA Board adopted it, against the position of countries like Brazil and Egypt. So the principles and objectives from 1995 don't really add that much to the non-proliferation side.

So the nuclear weapon states fought tooth and nail pretty much for each of the items under the disarmament part. Even the CTBT part was hard fought, because the Chinese and the French, they weren't yet ready and they did some nuclear tests right after the review conference.

Michal Onderco:

Yes. But when I interviewed, for example, Ambassador Errera from France, he said, "well, France was open about the fact that we couldn't commit to the CTBT just now and this was accepted as a welcome sign of honesty". Would you dispute that account?

Tariq Rauf:

No, I wouldn't because, you know, they gave the date of 1996 for the completion of the CTBT.

Michal Onderco:

Yes.

Tariq Rauf:

So in a sense the concession was made to the French and the Chinese. That "Okay, you have one year to work yourself out for the CTBT." And so these two countries thought that, okay, after the Review Conference, they can do their final tests. But then there was such an uproar that both China and France had to curtail. They didn't do all the tests that they wanted to do when, after '95.

So I think this was one area where there was compromise. It was more important to get China and France to sign onto CTBT, rather than to go for the next thing to say, "CTBT now." So 1996 was not that far away and if that price was to be paid to bring the two of them to get it -- so this was the only benchmark that had a particular date attached to it. No other had.

Michal Onderco:

Wow, that was one of the things that surprised me because when I looked at the draft of the Mexican resolution that the Mexicans put forward, one of the lines in the resolution said that most of the commitments should have a particular timeline attached to it.

Tariq Rauf:

Yes.

Michal Onderco:

And "Principle & Objectives", apart from CBPT, doesn't do timelines.

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah.

Michal Onderco:

Why did you decide to do away with the timelines or was it never your point?

Tariq Rauf:

The Western countries have never agreed on timelines. You know, this is the time-bound approach by NAM. And so four of the five at least, if not all five, would never agree to a timeline. You see, the Russians had stopped testing in October 1990 when Gorbachev announced a moratorium. Bush announced a moratorium in August 1992. So if the Americans are not testing, the British cannot test, because they test at Nevada. If three of the five are not testing anymore, that leaves only two. So these two are the odd countries out. These two also signed the NPT much later, right.

Michal Onderco:

Yes, yes.

Tariq Rauf:

So I think within the P5, the three put some pressure on the two. We don't know, but we surmise. To say, "Well, we need indefinite extension of the treaty. So we need to find a way to bring you onboard." But timelines or any other disarmament would never have been agreed.

Michal Onderco:

When it came to a discussion about the strengthened review process, was there also a position to the idea of bringing some sensitive issues to the review process?

Tariq Rauf:

Yes. Traditionally, the depositories and their close allies, they didn't want to provide any additional forums where they could be held to account. The NPT is the only forum where they will provide information on numbers and so on. They don't do that in Geneva. They don't do that in New York. They only do it in the NPT. Initially, there wasn't much support for it, but gradually they won over because they could also focus on non-proliferation and safeguards as well. So it wasn't a one-way street.

Michal Onderco:

Yeah. You mentioned also the Middle East resolution. That Middle East resolution was sort of negotiated apart, if I understand correctly. Why was it important to pass it? If I understand the approach with the getting of the votes and so on and so forth, it will be possible to get the votes on the treaty even without the Middle East resolution.

Tariq Rauf:

Yes, that is correct, but, you know, already in 1995 ... so in 1995, we already knew about Iraq's clandestine program that was in 1991. In 1995, suspicions about Iran's nuclear program were also well-known but not publicized. In the NSG format, the U.S. was telling NSG countries not to trade in nuclear issues with Iran, but they were not giving the reasons. So the other members of the NSG were accepting on trust. "Okay, the Americans have something they don't want to tell us. We believe them."

And so, in order to make sure that the Middle Eastern countries were in, and that we didn't have future "Iraqs" happening, it was important to bring in the Middle East. So I remember it was I think in the beginning of the third week when Ambassador Mohammed Shaker from the Egyptian delegation, towards the end of the day, he bumped into me and he said, "Well, they would like Canada to help broker a discussion between Egypt and the U.S. on the Middle East resolution." So by then it was already 6:00 and Ambassador Chris Westdal and me crossed First Avenue, went to the American Embassy mission, talked to them, and the Middle East negotiation then started on a separate track.

As you see, you know, the two decisions, one and two are politically binding and the third decision on indefinite extension is legally binding. But the Middle East resolution was not given the status of a decision. This is the first time a resolution was adopted in the NPT context. If you go back into the history of previous Review Conferences, every review conference had several resolutions that were tabled mainly by NAM countries on nuclear disarmament and nuclear testing. And they were always defeated. They were never approved. So '95 is the first and only time where a resolution

has been approved. And for one reason or another, the Arab States agreed to have a resolution rather than a decision. The details of it : I'll be happy to read your project thing when it's up if you want to know how the resolution came about.

But that was the price paid and if you look at Ambassador's Westdal's speeches, many, many times he referred to during the review conference that the resolution and the commitment for a zone was the mechanism that was required to bring the Middle East states, and the Middle East states were joining indefinite extension as an act of faith. So he had sort of recognized that the Middle East countries made a concession in supporting indefinite extension.

Michal Onderco:

One are the things that I as an analyst think about is the Middle East resolution brings into the treaty a big source of potential instability. So I'm a little puzzled why would a depository of the treaty, because the depositaries are actually the ones that were signed on the resolution, why did they bring so much instability to the treaty if they could have gone without it?

Tariq Rauf:

What do you mean by instability?

Michal Onderco:

Well, because we now see, for example, in the review process that it comes as a sticking point time and again. And I mean, one of the past PrepComs actually broke down on the Middle East.

Tariq Rauf:

Yes.

Michal Onderco:

And it must have been seen as a potential source of instability for the future.

Tariq Rauf:

No, I would disagree with that. The Middle East is one region other than South Asia where you have countries outside the entity with nuclear weapons. But in South Asia, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the neighbors of India and Pakistan did not make support for indefinite extension conditional about nuclear disarmament by India or Pakistan. Because India, in particular, and Pakistan, they are big boys in the NAM context. And these smaller countries didn't have the leverage.

The Middle East is completely different. There you have Israel surrounded by Arab countries and you have principal antagonists, you know, Egypt in particular, with whom Israel has -- Egypt and Israel have fought a number of wars. There's a peace treaty. Iraq was a powerful player. Syria was an important player. Iran is an important player. So the dynamics of South Asia couldn't work in the context of the Middle East. And the Middle East countries have a very strong leverage. They said, "Well, we have a country outside the NPT right inside the heart of our region, and we don't see any pressure brought on this country. And you have invaded Iraq. You've destroyed Iraq. You have Resolution 687 on Iraq. What about Israel? We're not going to do anything unless something is done on Israel." So this was the price that had to be paid to get the Middle East countries to support indefinite extension.

And it was very unfortunate that, you know, the extension decision was adopted in the morning of last day. But in the afternoon, Ambassador Dhanapala tried to get agreement on the backward part of the review process. Because, you know, this is the forward part, the Principle & Objectives. And already after lunch, statements were coming out of Washington backing away from the Middle East resolution after the indefinite extension had been pocketed. There were statements coming out of London, and Ambassador Dhanapala during the conference referred to this as triumphalism. "You guys got what you wanted and now you're sticking it to the other guys."

So I would say that some of the depositories betrayed the trust that they had given to the Middle East countries within hours of giving it. I would put the blame squarely on two of the three depositories, because Russia really was not the problem. It was primarily the U.S. for domestic political reasons. They made a deal to get something they wanted. And then as soon as the deal was done and pocketed, they sort of reneged from the deal. And that is what we see today where the 2010 conference on the Middle East -- sorry, 2012 conference on the Middle East - the first indication of its cancellation came up on the State Department's website.

So I wouldn't say it's instability, but I would say it's an act of bad faith on the part of at least two of the three depositories. I wouldn't blame Britain so much either. They are in a difficult position. Okay?

Michal Onderco:

You alluded already to the attempt to bring in other countries to the treaty with the reference to Israel. And the Principles and Objectives also refers to universalization of the treaty. Was there actually a realistic expectation that other countries could join the NPT?

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah, so you know, I think Brazil joined after '95.

Michal Onderco:

Yes, so Brazil joined, Cuba joined, Djibuti joined, UAE joined.

Tariq Rauf:

You know, all treaty review conferences of those treaties that have reviews always call for universality. We have a call for universality of the CTBT. We have a call for universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. So this is motherhood and apple pie, to call for universality. It's only in 2000 that Israel is named for the first time. In '95 they don't name who should join. They just said, "We want to achieve universality." So the call for universality is a standard thing in a review. It's the main one thing that the review process would ask for.

Michal Onderco:

So as a member of the delegation, you actually didn't expect that in the future Israel may join the NPT.

Tariq Rauf:

I think nobody expected that Israel would join the NPT. Everyone knows the Israeli position. They want peace first and so on, and then arms control will follow. The position of the Arabs is exactly opposite. "You give us arms control, de-neutralization, and then peace and recognition will follow." So these are irreconcilable positions. Nobody expected this to change. But one has to call for universalization. And the resolution suggested a specific mechanism to achieve universalization in the region of the Middle East.

And Article VII of the treaty explicitly recognizes nuclear weapon-free zones as contributing to the NPT. And, as you know, the first weapon-free zone existed even before the NPT came about. So calling for a Middle East zone is completely within the ambit of the treaty under Article VII, under Article VI, under Article III, Safeguards, Nuclear weapon-free zones, disarmament where disarmament needs to take place. And the same thing happens with the African zone treaty where the South Africans first get rid of their nuclear weapons, invite the IAEA, join the entity as a non-weapons state, and then come to the NPT. So that's what I think the Arabs were envisioning. There would be some process whereby, in their view, Israel would need to be compelled. And in their view, there's only one country that could compel Israel to do anything on the arms, so that's the U.S. But that really didn't happen and, therefore, we have this continuing tension on the Middle East issue.

Michal Onderco:

In the immediate aftermath of the conference, what were the expectations for the future on the Canadian side?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, I think on the Canadian side everyone was optimistic that this was a big success, that we would start using the review process for what it is, which actually Canada did. So we had a change of ambassadors and Chris Westdal was succeeded by Ambassador Mark Moher in '97 and '98. And already in '97, Canada started saying that each PrepCom should also be able to say something on the NPT. We shouldn't have to wait five years. So in '97 we already had the CTBT, so we should have some statement from the PrepCom commending the CTBT and so on.

The actual proposal for a text was made in 1998 at the '98 Prep-Con and this ended up being a direct confrontation between Canada and the U.S. And I think the U.S. head of delegation was Ambassador Norman Wolf at that time. And so Canada very strongly pushed -- and if you look at the Canadian statements of 1998, that the PrepCom should be able to make a statement on the integrity and authority of the NPT. This is again a Canadian term, like permanence with accountability and integrity and authority of the treaty. We should be able to say good things that have happened. We should highlight any negative thing that happened. And we should say something about the future. And now that the Pre-Con can discuss substance, this is within the parameters. Only the U.S. objected to this.

And so Canada then told the U.S. that Canada will formally propose it. The U.S. said, "If you propose this, we will oppose you. So don't propose this." But the view of the Canadian head of delegation was, "Fine, you do it in the big room, not in the little room, not in the Chair's consultations where there are only 25 and the big guys can use their muscle. You do it in the big room, in the plenary with all states parties present, with NGO's present, so that the world can see who is saying no to what." And so when the time came, Canada made the proposal. The United States objected. So, as you know, decisions are by consensus so the proposal failed. But Canada did try to, in a sense, operationalize the review process. And it tried to do this afterwards and I still continue to argue for this. I argued for article by article review and I asked even this year to the Chair of the PrepCom and asked at the review conference when I was advising one of the Chairs in 2014 PrepCom, we should have a state of the NPT statement. And it's in everybody's interest to do it.

You know, the Security Council has resolutions, but they also have statements by the President - Presidential statements on behalf of the Council. So it partly is like that. So this is not a resolution. It's not a decision. It's a statement by the Chair of the PrepCom on behalf of the state's parties attending on some items. It needs only to be one or two pages, 10-12 paragraphs.

But, unfortunately, there's no agreement on any side. The NAM countries say, "Well, you know, we cannot say anything in PrepCom. We have to wait for a review conference." And the Western side, again, says that. So from my point of view, that's completely nonsensical. We should be able to say at the 2017 PrepCom, that, you know, on whatever day it was -- 12th of May 2017, this is the state of our treaty. And we update it next year. This is not a statement for all time. It's a capsule statement, say something on the DPRK test; for example, say something on the Middle East.

So here I blame this on... now non-proliferation diplomacy, particularly in the NPT context has been declining. With the Conference on Disarmament stuck, negotiating skills are disappearing. People no longer can negotiate in real time. All they can do is read out prepared statements. And this is a great pity.

Michal Onderco:

One of the things that you mentioned in your article with Rebecca Johnson is that one of the keys to success by Canada in the treaty [review] was that it was able to reach across the aisle to the NAM countries and bring a lot of NAM countries onboard. And that this hasn't been done before and it certainly has been very rarely done after. What do you think enabled you to do that?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, you know, this diplomacy by Chris Westdal with the lunches and dinners, the Mason Group, the Cosmopolitan Core Group, they all served to spread the message. It was only coming from Canada, it was also coming from some of the NAM states themselves who were sort of leaning towards supporting indefinite extension. So it wasn't all Canadians. You know, Canada alone doesn't have all that credibility because it's very much in the Western Alliance. So we needed countries from within the NAM itself to make the case. And slowly, more and more countries started to see the value of indefinite extension of having some of these benchmarks and the Principles and Objectives, of having 10 working days to beat up on the nuclear weapons states every year, four years out of five. So those were powerful incentives for them to get away from a rolling extension, which would have meant that the PrepCom would have still remained for five days, no discussion of substance. There wouldn't have been any benchmarks like the principles and objectives. For the Middle East countries, there likely wouldn't have been a Middle East resolution. So by supporting this version of indefinite extension, everyone was getting a lot as part of making the treaty of indefinite duration.

Michal Onderco:

Apart from South Africa, who would you say were your closest ally in the NAM group?

Tariq Rauf:

I can't recollect at the moment. I mentioned some of them in my different articles. Yeah, at the moment nobody's jumping out. It's a long time back.

Michal Onderco:

Before I forget, some of my interviewees end the interview by saying that they could have foreseen the sort of humanitarian movement and the divisions that exist within the non-proliferation region today already in 1995. So the beginnings of the division that exists today was sown in 1995. Would you agree with that assessment?

Tariq Rauf:

No, I think that's incorrect. We already see this division in the very first review conference in 1995 shared by the Swedish diplomat Inga Thorsson. So this divide and the fight over nuclear disarmament was evident from the very first PrepCom. And the 1980 [RevCon] succeeded but '85 failed. '85 failed mainly because of the Iran-Iraq War. 1990 failed because the U.S. refused to accept the Mexican proposal for language on the CTBT. So this again is nuclear disarmament.

And if you want to bring in humanitarian, in an indirect way, you know, nuclear testing has implications in terms of radioactive fallout, particularly when it's being done in the South Pacific and elsewhere.

And in 1995, we saw a replay of that, but since the main nuclear weapons states, and then NATO and other allies wanted in that extension, they sort of compromised to accept the terminology and the Principles and Objectives. In 2000 everyone was surprised that 2000 was a success. But in 2000 we had a powerful new actor in terms of the New Agenda Coalition. The new agenda coalition was acting less than the NAM hardliners but asking more than the traditional Western countries, like Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and so on. So the NAC then became the interlocutor with the five weapons states. So it was the six NAC countries and the five nuclear weapons states.

Michal Onderco:

Why did Canada not join the NAC?

Tariq Rauf:

This was a big issue. You know, as a NATO member, as a country that has a bilateral defense agreement with the United States, it became very difficult for Canada to join the NAC, even though the Foreign Minister at the time Lloyd Axworthy, was very pro-nuclear disarmament. He went to NATO Foreign Ministers meetings. He talked about getting rid of tactical nuclear weapons. The

Canadian Parliament issued a report in 1999 with a number of recommendations. The Foreign Ministry under Lloyd Axworthy accepted many of those recommendations. But joining that would have been too costly for Canada in terms of the bilateral relationship with the U.S., the relationship with NATO countries.

So Canada already was subscribing to many of the positions being advocated by NAC without actually being a member of that.

Michal Onderco:

Okay. I have reached the end of my questions. Is there something I should have asked about and I didn't?

Tariq Rauf:

So you want to focus primarily on '95?

Michal Onderco:

I'm focusing mainly on '95.

Tariq Rauf:

Okay.

Michal Onderco:

Because that's the project focus.

Tariq Rauf:

Well, has anybody mentioned, we discussed that some of the key countries, although they had trust in the President, didn't really trust the President. You went through that as well.

Michal Onderco:

Yes.

Tariq Rauf:

So has anybody mentioned whether any incentives were offered to the President to change his view?

Michal Onderco:

I haven't heard about that. Have you heard anything about that?

Tariq Rauf:

Well, there is a story that, you know, some of the P5's suggested to the President, that if the outcome was in their favor, the President could be favorably considered to be the next Secretary General of the United Nations.

Michal Onderco:

Oh, okay. Well, I haven't heard about that.

Tariq Rauf:

Well, if you speak to some other people, you can ask them. In the end, if they made such a promise, they didn't keep it, although Ambassador Dhanapala became the Undersecretary General for Disarmament. But my point here is a broader point. That some of these countries are quite prepared to either threaten or... to offer either carrots or sticks to chairs of PrepCom and Presidents of review conferences to achieve the outcomes that they would like. So there's a lot of pressure put on the President of a Review Conference in order for the President to shape the outcome.

Michal Onderco:

Well, for example, the NAM meeting that was happening in Bandung at the time of the conference--

Tariq Rauf:

Yes, Bandung, not Cartagena, Bandung, yeah.

Michal Onderco:

Yeah. It was sort of brought out by South Africa and Benin. And somebody nobody quite is able to understand why Benin would stand up to the NAM and try to block the outcome.

Tariq Rauf:

Benin?

Michal Onderco:

Yes.

Tariq Rauf:

Yeah, but you know Benin is very much under French influence, not surprising at all.

Michal Onderco:

Well, also the thing is that many outside interviewees mention that. But there seems to be nobody in France who remembers a discussion with Benin about that topic.

Tariq Rauf:

Of course not. I mean, I indicated this earlier in my comments that, you know, some of the more powerful countries, some of the countries with colonial pasts, they still influence. And they use this influence to the maximum as and when needed. So I also alluded the fact that there wasn't a unified position coming out of the Bandung Summit was not accidental. It was something that had been planned and it succeeded. This is part of the weakness of NAM, the lack of cohesion and solidarity in there.

And, you know, in the full NAM Summit, you also had India and Pakistan present who were not NPT states. Particularly India is loathe to support NPT. So that may also be in the hand in terms of India. And it's not incidental, but you know that the very first Indian nuclear test was conducted in 1974, one year before the first Review Conference. The next round of Indian tests were conducted in 1998, just a couple of years after indefinite extension. So there are many different strands here at play at the history project that you are now working on. And now that time has passed, more of these details can come out.

Michal Onderco:

Well, I thank you very much for all the information.